

N A T U R E:
A N
E T H I C E P I S T L E,

Inscribed to the

Honourable Mrs. D---Y.

Nonne cupidinibus statuit NATURA modum? HOR.

L O N D O N :

Printed for W. FLEXNEY, near GRAY'S-INN-GATE,
HOLBORN.

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[Price One Shilling.]

R Jones

N A T U R

T H I S

Honorable Mrs. D. Y.

Honorable Mrs. D. Y.

L O N D O N

WILLIAM L. G. & CO. LTD.

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Advertisement.

THE author of the following performance thinks it incumbent on him to declare, that in the character he has drawn, no particular persons are meant. A general observation of mankind gave birth to the plan on which this epistle proceeds; and he flatters himself that the least survey of the world will prove it just. He hopes also that no deduction to his disadvantage will be made, or he looked on as one of a cynical, ill-natured disposition, from any severe reflections he has had occasion to draw: The shaft is not levelled at particulars, particulars therefore cannot reasonably be offended at what arises from daily experience.



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no objection to his disquisitions will be made, or he looked
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possibly be affected as when written from daily ex-
perience.

A N
E T H I C E P I S T L E,

Inscribed to the

Honourable Mrs. D---Y.

KINDEST of parents! listen and excuse
This fond intrusion of my filial muse:
How blest my soul! how glows my honest pride!
To thee by nature's tenderest tie ally'd:
Pleas'd, and with wonder, all thy worth I view,
Then pay the homage to such virtue due.
Others too praise thee, and admiring see
A perfect pattern of all good in Thee.
Thy fost'ring care first prun'd my trembling wing,
Taught me to soar, and gave me life to sing:

B.

'Tis filial piety inscribes thy name,
 And fondly gives thee this attempt to fame.
 How oft with pleasing rapture have I hung
 On each soft accent flowing from thy tongue !
 Thy method so endearing, Virtue wore
 A gayer face, and charms unknown before :
 But, when o'erflowing with thy deep distress,
 Silence spoke more than language cou'd express,
 When the big drop stood trembling in thy eye,
 A parent's yearnings bursting in a sigh,
 When thy fond soul did o'er thy prating gaze,
 Revolving future scenes for future days,
 And, in the anguish of thy troubled breast,
 Claspt thy young babe, while tears declar'd the rest ;
 The soft infection caught my infant eye,
 I wept to see thee weep, yet knew not why.
 If in these pages scatter'd thou canst find,
 A few faint traces of thy own good mind,
 Forgive my faults too numerous ; nor complain
 Those Lessons infancy receiv'd were vain.

O read attentive ! whilst, in artless lay,
 Truths drawn from just experience I convey ;
 Explore the mazy labyrinth of man ;
 Trace each mæander of the god-like plan ;
 Assign a cause, why all our actions tend
 (Tho' varying in themselves) to one great end :
 With honest freedom due enquiring use,
 Judge for myself, and by my judgment chuse.
 But bold the task, and arduous to the mind,
 Unless strong parts with stronger sense is join'd.
 For error oft, too specious to the fight,
 Deceives our judgment, by appearing right.
 If once we err, in vain conviction tries
 To point the truth, all aid our pride denies.
 And, rather than acknowledge it is wrong,
 Defends its faults, and boldly blunders on.
 Conscious of this, may Reason be my guide,
 Sweet-smiling Candour o'er my steps preside,
 Whilst, boldly daring, I attempt to know
 The secret spring whence human actions flow.

Our first position, and great truth, is this :

* ‘ Who follows nature cannot act amiss.’

Hence I conclude, and to this point refer,

‘ That those who most forsake her, most will err.’

What Nature means ’tis proper next to scan,

‘ Nature is active Providence in man ;

‘ Great Truths implanted on the soul by Heav’n,

‘ And a just Rule for human actions giv’n.’

But most, impatient of this general law,

Will deviate first, then false conclusions draw.

And, pleas’d their own absurdities to screen,

Make nature, what she ne’er intended, mean.

Ask you the cause ? Oh ! view that endless strife

With warring passions which we wage thro’ life ;

(For most will cherish some peculiar vice,

Ambition, Pleasure, Pride, or Avarice,

And, as directed by this fav’rite will,

They act obedient either good or ill.)

* *Natura optima recte vivendi dux. Tull. de Amic.*

Naturam si sequemur ducem, nunquam aberrabimus. Offic. 1.

Naturâ duce errari nullo pacto potest. de Leg.

Blindly capricious, never twice the same,
 To-morrow praising, what to-day we blame :
 Always unhappy, as without controul,
 These passions rule despotic o'er the soul ;
 Give one indulgence, give it scope and ease,
 Another rises harder yet to please.
 Yet even here arraign not heav'n's intent,
 Who with each passion, hath in wisdom lent
 Means to controul, authority to bind,
 And sense to guide each struggling of the mind.
 But, tho' so changeable the heart of man,
 So inconsistent in his ev'ry plan,
 Yet one fixt principle in all we find,
 INTEREST, the constant bias of the mind :
 Interest, the spring whence all our acts proceed,
 The secret cause that reconciles each deed :
 Interest thro' life attendant on the soul,
 Blends in our actions, and directs the whole.
 But acts with less or greater influence,
 As men have better or inferior sense.

The difference then 'twixt fools and men of parts,
 Lies here, (alike their principles and hearts,)

But with nice care the man of sense conceals
 Those truths, a fool without a blush reveals.
 Look round the world! — Lo! one for private ends,
 To some peculiar quality pretends :
 (Deceit at heart, low cunning all his rule,)

Procures the friendship of some wealthy fool;
 Studies his foibles with unwearied pains,
 Flatters them nicely, and his purpose gains :
 That knows you childless, — then protests regard,
 And has your fortune as his lie's reward.

A third becomes a patriot, and pretends
 He serves his country, — but he serves his ends ;
 Like Falstaff thinks, that honor's but a name,
 And sterling gold of greater worth than Fame.
 Cloak'd with religion, (ev'ry rascal's tool,)

A fourth securely cheats each praying fool.
 How plain the inference! — virtue only means
 Superior cunning in life's busy scenes ;

That Knavery always must triumphant rise,
 Whilst real Merit unsupported dies :
 That Friendship's but a bubble, that regard
 Not from the person rises, but reward :
 And he esteem'd of highest worth, who can
 With nicest art deceive his fellow man.
 Hence too our sense of honor has its rise,
 As all our influence with our honor dies :
 (A word of that nice meaning it conveys
 A rascal's virtue, and a hero's praise.)
 Nor farther will the world each other trust
 Than as they think each other's actions just.
 Yet some exceptions to this rule we find
 Men who possess an open worthy mind ;
 Whose days are chequer'd by this simple plan,
 Respect to Heav'n, humanity to man :
 Who, unpolluted by the gen'ral ill,
 Follow true nature, and are honest still:
 But these how few ! how seldom he appears !
 The rising wonder of a thousand Years !

Now bursting on the world, O D——E ! in thee,
 A blessing to thy country, and to me.
 Others there are, in whom 'tis hard to say
 If vice or virtue bear the greater sway :
 A motley brood ! so very dull they find
 No ruling passion to impel the mind :
 Whom neither kindness nor affronts can rouse
 To just revenge, or friendship's mutual vows,
 But plod thro' life, implicitly obey,
 As the first whim or rascal leads the way :
 When age advances, and in headstrong youth,
 Or blindly err, or stumble upon truth.
 Others we find too lazy to be knaves,
 Too dull for business, and to fancy slaves ;
 Who, born of folly, chequer ev'ry day
 With various sports, and trifle life away :
 Who fancy Heav'n no pleasures can dispense,
 Beyond the dull enjoyments of their sense ;
 And reason giv'n them merely to supply
 The wants of nature, eat, drink, sleep, and die, }
 Whilst nobler ends are thrown neglected by. }

Hapless to those the present moment flies,
 Nor with more pleasure does the future rise,
 For no ideas in themselves they find,
 (If time once lingers) to employ the mind,
 But fill the void with busy trifling things,
 As catching butterflies, or counting pins.
 Turn then from these, and view with cautious looks,
 Men deeply vers'd in languages and books;
 Morose, impertinent, ill-natur'd, proud,
 Dull, and (to hide it) troublesome and loud.
 Who, their small knowledge from old authors draw,
 Esteem them sacred, and their writings Law;
 OPINE that Empires, Laws, and Customs, last
 The same at present as in ages past:
 Can tell why Tarquin was expell'd and fled,
 Yet know not whether Charles, or Cromwell bled:
 Try each young genius by scholastic rules,
 Then boldly praise them, or pronounce them fools,
 As fancy, interest, or more powerful pride
 Direct their reason, and their judgment guide:

Who form their notions of the world, and man,
 On some philosopher's exploded plan,
 Then come in life, pedantic and unknown,
 Are cheated, laugh'd at, ridicul'd, undone.
 Say then,—can these who study to no end,
 Or those, whose hours important trifles spend,
 Their great Creator's high intent fulfil
 By partial acts against a general will?
 Oh, no! Hark! Nature thro' her works cries loud,
 'The world is made for man, and man for God.'
 To this, three separate duties owe their birth,
 Binding to all, and man's great end on earth.
 The first we pay in rev'rence due to Heav'n,
 Ourselves the next, to man the third is giv'n:
 Yet e'en in these observe distinctions nice,
 And know that — 'VIRTUE IN EXTREME IS VICE.'
 That Reason fails, and Error leads aside,
 When man obeys not this ne'er failing guide;
 Then timely wise, project a better plan,
 And know, 'a proper medium is for man.'

Follow this maxim, safely steer between
 The two extremes, and find the golden mean;
 Aim not at excellence; — let acting well
 Suffice: — Heav'n never made us to excel.
 How few acknowledge these great truths below!
 Of these, how few will practice what they know!
 But form and follow, as their passions will;
 Some plan absurd, that always tends to ill
 From this strange discord in the human breast,
 (Where all esteem their own opinions best:)
 How hard the path of happiness to find!
 And yet how easy to a willing mind!
 Most, discontented of their lot complain;
 Wish for a change, — but find that change in vain;
 As they their own unhappiness remain. }
 The secret art to gain her wouldst thou know?
 Think thyself happy, — thou art really so:
 Due resignation to the will of Heav'n,
 A second means of happiness is giv'n.
 Supported thus, dependent on the soul,
 In vain externals would disturb the whole,

Tho' pleasure smile, or dire misfortune frown,
 Still may'st thou call true happiness thy own.
 But most will follow, (such the pride of man!)
 As best, tho' worst, their own concerted plan;
 Forget that Nature's second law is this,
 ' Due moderation in enjoying blifs :'
 Exert their utmost efforts to pursue
 Some trifle, ever varying, ever new :
 And act, regardless of those duties giv'n,
 For general motives, by the hand of Heav'n :
 On these their schemes of happiness depend ;
 But find their means improper to its end :
 Too soon perceive their long-sought phantom fled ;
 And meet a train of sorrows in its stead.
 Ask you more proofs ? stands not this truth confest ?
 That ' Nature acts in all things for the best :
 ' Always she moves consistent and the same,
 ' And, if man errs, his only is the blame.'
 Yet some perhaps may cavil, and pretend
 Man form'd unable to fulfil his end :

Too weak, (tho' such his duty) to controul
 Those very passions nature gave his soul.
 If wrong to please those passions why first giv'n?
 If not, why made so? — By the will of Heav'n.
 That Nature errs not must appear from this;
 Brutes in their stations never act amiss;
 Blind to the future, heedless of the past,
 Their hours are only noticed as they last:
 Each, as she guides his proper lot supplies,
 Fulfils her orders, and unnoticed dies.
 Its various tasks the natural world performs:
 Now rules the sun, and now impetuous storms.
 And thro' the whole creation we can see
 Preserv'd fair order, and just harmony.
 If then so perfect in her general plan,
 Why should she droop, and fail alone in man?
 But, how unjust, how erring, shall we find
 These bold arraigners of th' eternal mind!
 On us, as fav'rite children, is bestow'd
 Freewill and Reason, — two best gifts of God!

GOD gave us passions for this general end,
 That man might mutual each on each depend.
 (For all our wants must from these passions rise,
 And man to man these daily wants supplies.)
 But, lest these passions, with resistless force
 Should bear down all before them in their course;
 Destroy society, confuse the whole,
 And rule despotic masters of the soul;
 He gave us Reason as a proper rein,
 To check their fury, and their speed restrain:
 Freedom of choice, he added to the rest,
 That man might chuse what Reason thought the best:
 But, if perverted, different ends pursued,
 These turn to curses tho' intended good;
 If proudly man refuses to supply
 His proper rank, or act consistently,
 Abuses reason to some favourite ill,
 And fondly calls each foolish choice freewill;
 Can Nature justly bear the blame of this?
 Pure are her ways, — 'tis we that act amiss.

All-seeing Wisdom made distinctions nice
 'Twixt every virtue and it's kindred vice,
 Must he be blam'd if these are oft destroy'd?
 Or render'd, by absurd caprices, void?
 If, as opinion dictates, they obey
 To-morrow virtue, what is vice to-day?
 How justly therefore we infer that man
 Rises in all things equal to his plan!
 When nature planted passions on the soul,
 To form society, and link the whole,
 It wisely added Reason, that the mind
 Might guide them to the good of all mankind,
 Turn to its proper object all their force,
 And mark the limits of their utmost course.
 (When therefore errors in our conduct rise,
 With us the blame, and not with Nature, lies.)
 And when th' Almighty form'd 'twixt good and ill
 Distinctions nice, He then bestow'd Freewill.
 Since therefore men implicitly pursue
 What interest wills, or passion bids them do,

Forget the nobler motives of their birth,
And live but reasonable brutes on earth,
Guided by thee, dear parent, let me fly
Those dangerous follies, which they taste, and die :
Study the book of nature, and its laws ;
Before I act, first know the action's cause :
Inform my mind : Truth's sacred call obey :
Follow where Reason points the dubious way :
Consistent be in every thing I can :
And mould complete the character of Man.

F I N I S.